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East Timor: The terror continues

Continued attacks by pro-integration paramilitary groups underline the need for a strong human rights component to any accord on East Timor, Amnesty International said today.

Despite a peace agreement initiated by the Head of the Indonesian Armed Forces, General Wiranto, and signed by representatives from paramilitary groups, the Indonesian Armed Forces and pro-independence groups on 21 April, the Indonesian security forces have failed to stop continuing abuses.

A paramilitary group, *Laksaur Merah Putih*, has reportedly threatened to kill independence supporters in the town of Suai, some 100 km south of Dili. At least 10 people were abducted by the paramilitary group on 19 April. Among them is believed to have been Abilio Pires, whose death has been confirmed. According to reports, friends and relatives are too afraid to retrieve his body because of fears for their own safety. The whereabouts of the others is still not known.

In Liquisa, where at least 18 -- and possibly many more -- civilians were killed by paramilitary groups on 6 April 1999, seven people are reported to have been killed since the 21 April.

"It is obvious from these events that the paramilitaries had no intention of laying down their weapons and that the military has no intention of restraining them," Amnesty International said.

"General Wiranto had vowed to enforce the peace deal, and has it within his power to control the paramilitary groups. However, it is clear that nothing is being done," Amnesty International said.

"For this reason it is essential that any political settlement on East Timor include practical measures for their disarming and disbandment and effective UN human rights monitoring to stop any further abuses," the organization added.

In the meantime, paramilitary groups which terrorised East Timor's capital Dili last week are still present in the town. Manuel Carrascaleo, whose son was killed with 11 other people when his house was attacked on 17 April, remains in Dili's police headquarters in protective custody.

Over 100 people -- around 40 of which were in Manuel Carrascaleo's house at the time of the attack -- are held at the police headquarters. Human rights lawyers are not allowed to visit them. It still not known what happened to around another 80 internal refugees who were also hiding in Manuel Carrascaleo's house on the day of the attack.

"The list of people who have been threatened by the paramilitaries is growing longer everyday," Amnesty International said. "It is absolutely essential that the international community exerts all the influence possible on the Indonesian authorities to protect these people now." ENDS.../

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom
Tel: Int. Code: (44) (171) 413 5500. UK Code: (0171) 413 5500. Fax: Int. Code: (44) (171) 956 1157. UK Code: (0171) 956 1157.
E-Mail: amnestyis@amnesty.org Web: http://www.amnesty.org
Telegrams: Amnesty London WC1 Telex: 28502 AMNSTY G